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SENATE BILL 2920 By  
Wilder

HOUSE BILL 2896  
By Rinks

AN ACT to designate a certain segment of U.S. Highway 45 in the City of Selmer, McNairy County as the "William Kendall Abernathy Highway".

WHEREAS, from time to time, this General Assembly has named certain highways and bridges in honor of those outstanding citizens who during their lifetimes distinguished themselves as invaluable assets to their respective communities; and

WHEREAS, William Kendall "W.K." Abernathy truly epitomized the ideal of the dedicated and proficient public servant, and he often exceeded the call of duty to ensure that his fellow citizens were being well served by their government; and

WHEREAS, William Kendall Abernathy was a native son of McNairy County who contributed significantly to his community as an attorney, statesman and civic leader; and

WHEREAS, after losing an election bid for Mayor of Selmer to his brother, Terry, Mr. Abernathy ran for and was elected to the Tennessee House of Representatives; he served with acumen and alacrity in the House during the 52nd, 53rd, 54th and 58th General Assemblies, representing McNairy County; and

WHEREAS, he earned the respect and admiration of his peers and constituents alike during his singular term as Speaker of the House for the 54th General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, he would later serve as the Mayor of Selmer (1928-1933) and as District Attorney General for eight years; and

WHEREAS, in 1914, Mr. Abernathy was elected to the Tennessee State Senate and served astutely in the Upper House during the 59th, 66th, 67th, 68th, and 69th General Assemblies, representing McNairy, Benton, Decatur, Hardeman and Hardin counties; and

WHEREAS, during his illustrious eighteen-year tenure in the General Assembly, W.K. Abernathy served on many important committees, but perhaps none more important than the State Road Committee; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Abernathy was ably serving as Chairman of the State Road Committee when the plan to build a hard surface highway through Tennessee was first instituted; and

WHEREAS, as the plan was finalized, W.K. Abernathy convinced the committee to have U.S. Highway 64 and U.S. Highway 45 intersect in Selmer, his hometown and the county seat of McNairy County; and

WHEREAS, it was thus that a major north-south route came to intersect with a major east-west route in Selmer, guaranteeing the then young McNairy County's future growth and progress; and

WHEREAS, because of his instrumental role in locating this major intersection in Selmer and his indelible legacy of tireless public service to McNairy County, the McNairy County Historical Society and the McNairy County Board of Commissioners have petitioned this Body to name a certain segment of U.S. Highway 45 in Selmer to posthumously honor William Kendall "W.K." Abernathy and his life of purpose and commitment to his fellow man; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly most heartily concurs in this excellent proposal; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, the following segment of U.S. Highway 45 in the City of Selmer, McNairy County is hereby designated as the

“William Kendall Abernathy Highway” as a lasting tribute to this exemplary public servant and remarkable human being:

Beginning at such highway's intersection with U.S. Highway 64 southward to the southern corporate boundary of the City of Selmer.

SECTION 2. The Department of Transportation is directed to erect suitable markers or to affix suitable signs designating such segment of U.S. Highway 45 in the City of Selmer, McNairy County as the “William Kendall Abernathy Highway”.

SECTION 3. The erection of such signs shall be within the guidelines prescribed by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

SECTION 4. This act shall become operative only if the federal highway administrator advises the commissioner of transportation in writing that the provisions of this act shall not render Tennessee in violation of federal laws and regulations and subject to penalties prescribed therein.

SECTION 5. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.